

SOLAS Customer Charter

2025 – 2027

Introduction

SOLAS is the state agency responsible for Further Education and Training (FET) in Ireland. We are committed to delivering the highest standards of customer care. We work hard to improve our customer service.

Who is our customer?

When we say our customer we mean someone who uses our services. This can be directly, or indirectly through another organisation.

If you contact us and your enquiry does not relate to services we provide we will try to help you by suggesting an organisation or individual who may be able to help you.

Our commitment to you

We will deliver a professional, efficient and courteous service to each of our customers. We will treat all of our customers equally, and without discrimination or bias. We know that different customers have different needs and we will aim to meet these needs.

This Customer Charter is a public statement which sets out the standards and level of service you can expect when dealing with us. Our charter describes:

- the levels of service you can expect when you contact us
- how you can help to improve our services
- how to get more information from us
- how to make a complaint
- how to contact our office

Levels of service to expect when you contact or visit us

If you email us:

Our general contact email address is info@solas.ie.

Other general email addresses are in operation for different purposes – you can find them on the relevant pages on our website www.solas.ie.

In most cases you will get an immediate automatic response to let you know we have received your email. If you do not get an automatic response, and a response is required, your email will be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt.

You will receive a full response within 20 working days of acknowledgement. Where this is not possible, we will contact you explaining the reason for the delay and tell you when we will respond.

‘Working days’ does not include weekends, public holidays and days at Easter and Christmas when our office is closed – at these times there may be a slightly longer response times.

If your enquiry relates to services we do not directly provide, we will let you know. Every effort will be made to pass your query to an organisation or individual who may be able to help you.

You may receive automated email responses when staff are out of the office. This will tell you who to contact if your enquiry is urgent.

We will include a contact name, telephone number and email address in all email correspondence.

If you write to us:

If we receive a letter from you, we will deal with your enquiry as quickly as possible. We will be helpful and polite.

If another organisation is better placed to answer your query, we will let you know who to contact.

All letters we receive will be acknowledged within 10 working days of

receipt, by post if only a postal address is given, or by email if an email address is given.

A full response to all letters we receive will be sent within 20 working days. If this is not possible, we will contact you and explain the reason for the delay and tell you when a response will issue be sent.

We will include a contact name, phone number and email address in all written correspondence.

If you phone us:

Our main phone number is **01 533 2500**.

We will answer call to our main phone number quickly.

We will ask you some details about your enquiry.

We will direct your call to the correct area or individual within SOLAS. We will let you know the name of the person or section your call is being transferred to.

If your enquiry does not relate to services we provide, we will let you know, and we will try to suggest an organisation or individual who may be able to help you.

If your call is not answered, you will be able to leave a voicemail message.

We will check voicemail messages regularly.

Stored voicemail messages will be cleared regularly to avoid the mailbox filling up.

If you leave a voicemail, it will be responded to within 5 working days.

If you visit SOLAS:

Our office is not open to the general public. You must make an appointment in advance if you wish to visit us.

All of our visitors will be treated in a courteous and prompt manner.

We will ensure that our reception and meeting facilities are fully accessible for all our visitors and comply with Health and Safety regulations.

Our commitments on accessibility

We know that different groups of our customers will have different needs and requirements.

SOLAS has an **Access Officer** who can help if you have specific accessibility requirements. You can contact them by emailing accessofficer@solas.ie or phoning our office on **01 533 2500** and asking to speak to them.

Website/Publications

SOLAS has a responsibility to provide information on its activities. We will maintain and develop our websites to ensure they are accessible, informative and up to date.

We will ensure that our publications are clear, address user needs and are available on our website.

You can find more information about this on the accessibility section of our website here: <https://www.solas.ie/accessibility/>

Plain language

We aim to communicate in plain language to help make our information easier to understand and accessible. When you contact us we will reply using clear, simple language. We will avoid using jargon and technical terms as much as we can.

Service through Irish

We will make every effort to accommodate customers who wish to conduct their business through Irish. We are committed to meeting our obligations under the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021.

We will publish important documents such as our Corporate Plan and Annual Report simultaneously in Irish and English. We will also publish other information and material in Irish on our website www.solas.ie

Public Sector Duty on Equality and Human Rights

SOLAS is committed to protecting the equality and human rights of everyone who uses our services and all of our staff. You can find out more about how we do that on our website here:

<https://www.solas.ie/about/public-sector-duty>

Our commitments to our suppliers

We will operate clear, impartial and transparent tendering and purchasing procedures in accordance with Public Procurement Guidelines.

We will ensure that payments to suppliers are made in accordance with applicable Prompt Payments legislation and regulations.

More information on this can be found at: <https://www.solas.ie/freedom-of-information/>

What we ask of you

In order to help us to keep our commitments we ask that you:

- Treat our staff in a courteous and fair manner in all your dealings with us.
- Have patience with us at peak times when available staff are busy.
- Give us feedback by making comments or suggestions about the service you receive and letting us know when we do something well by emailing us at info@solas.ie
- Please provide us with full, accurate and up to date information when you contact us.

Complaints

If you are unhappy with the quality of service you receive from us, you have the right to make a complaint.

SOLAS will respond to complaints in relation to services it delivers directly.

Complaints in relation to the delivery of FET programmes should be raised with the programme provider in the first instance, for example the Education and Training Board (ETB) that provided the service.

If you wish to make a complaint about our services you should contact our Complaint Liaison Officer by post, email or telephone. The contact details are below.

By post:

Complaints Liaison Officer,
SOLAS,
Block 1, Castleforbes House,
Castleforbes Road,
Dublin 1
D01 A8N0

By email: complaints@solas.ie

By phone: Call us on **01 533 2500** and ask to speak to the Complaints Liaison Officer.

When we receive your complaint, the Complaints Liaison Officer will bring the complaint to the attention of the appropriate person in SOLAS.

We will treat your complaint fairly and impartially.

We will write to you and acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days.

If we have not been able to help you straight away, we will follow up with a full response to your complaint within 20 more working days from our first acknowledgement.

If you are unhappy with how we handle your complaint you can request a review. A review will be handled by a more senior person within SOLAS. You must request a review within 20 working days of receiving our full response. We will carry out the review and let you know the outcome within another 20 working days.

More information about the complaints process can be found on our website at: <https://www.solas.ie/contact-us/#complaints>

The role of the Ombudsman

We hope that if you make a complaint to SOLAS we will be able to resolve it. However, if you remain unhappy with our decision then you can refer your complaint to the Office of the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman is impartial and free to use. They examine complaints from members of the public who feel they have been unfairly treated by certain public bodies, including SOLAS. Complaints must have already been dealt with through our internal complaints process in the first place before the Ombudsman will investigate.

The Ombudsman will ask you for details of your complaint and to provide a copy of our final response to your complaint.

The best way to refer a complaint to the Ombudsman is by clicking on 'Make A Complaint' at their website www.ombudsman.ie.

You can also write to:

Office of the Ombudsman,
6 Earlsfort Terrace,
Dublin 2,
D02 W773.

You can also call the Ombudsman's Office on 01 639 5600.

Protected Disclosures

Workers in the Further Education or Apprenticeship areas can make protected disclosures of serious wrongdoings to the CEO of SOLAS. There are strict legal rules about what types of wrongdoings can be reported with this process.

Further information about the process and how to make a disclosure can be found here: <https://www.solas.ie/protected-disclosures/>

Freedom of Information (FOI)

SOLAS complies with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

Under the FOI Act, you have the right to get copies of certain information that we hold.

We will make every effort to provide you with as much information as possible informally, outside of the FOI Act.

However, if you wish to make a formal request under the Act, you should email foi@solas.ie or visit our website here: <https://www.solas.ie/freedom-of-information/>

Data Protection/GDPR

We are committed to making sure that any data you provide to us is secure. We will follow all laws, and any data provided to us will only be used for the purpose it was given to us.

We will take all reasonable steps to secure and protect your personal data while complying with Irish Data Protection Law. This law includes the EU General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679, known as “GDPR”.

Further information, including how to contact our Data Protection Officer, is available on our website at <https://www.solas.ie/data-protection/>

How to contact us:

SOLAS Address	SOLAS Block 1 Castleforbes House Castleforbes Road Dublin 1 D01 A8N0
To contact us by phone	+353 (01) 533 2500 Switchboard operating hours: Monday to Friday 9 to 12.30 and 1.30 to 4
To make a general email enquiry	info@solas.ie
To contact us about Freedom of Information	+353 (01) 533 2392 foi@solas.ie
To contact our Access Officer	+353 (01) 533 2500 accessofficer@solas.ie
To contact us about Data Protection / GDPR	+353 (01) 533 2500 dpo@solas.ie
To make a Complaint	+353 (01) 533 2500 complaints@solas.ie
To make a Protected Disclosure	leave a recorded voice message on +353 (01) 533 2595 protecteddisclosures@solas.ie
To make a media enquiry	communications@solas.ie
Contact details for other sections of SOLAS such as Apprenticeship and Construction can be found on the contacts page on the SOLAS website here: https://www.solas.ie/contact-us/	